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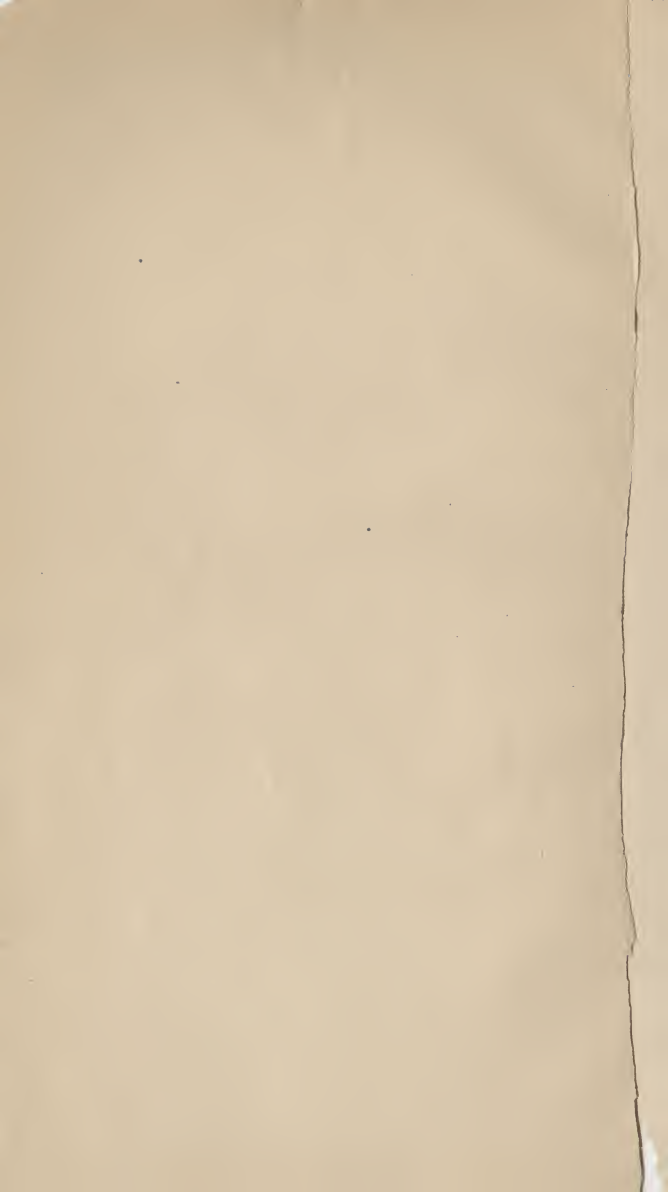


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AUGUSTUS LOWELL.

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Augustus Lowell



Augustus Louis

AUGUSTUS LOWELL.

AUGUSTUS LOWELL was born in Boston, Jan. 15, 1830. His father was John Amory Lowell and his mother Elizabeth (Putnam) Lowell, daughter of Hon. Samuel Putnam of Salem. Both the Lowell and the Putnam families were early settlers in the new world, the former landing in Newburyport in 1639, the latter in Salem in 1630. Mr. Lowell thus came of Puritan stock on both sides. Otherwise the parts of his inheritance differed, for the Lowells were Norman by descent — the name, originally Lowle, dating from the conquest — while the Putnams, originally Puttenham, were apparently Saxon. He inherited the qualities of his name. Mentally he was the son of his father; as a matter of fancy as much as of fact, his mother's share in him being chiefly physical. For while in feature he looked like her, in mind he not only resembled his father but looked up to him with a very unusual amount of reverence and esteem. The feeling doubtless was born of the fact and is noteworthy because of the common belief that capable men have had capable mothers. Yet not only in his case but in the case of his father, grandfather, and great-grandfather before him, the capacity followed the name. Indeed the family has proved a singular instance of prepotence in the male line, while the temperament has been as strikingly a maternal gift.

In Boston and in its immediate neighborhood his boyhood was spent. Of the winter delights of town as seen through youthful eyes we are given a glimpse in a letter written at the time to his friend, Mr. Augustus Peabody. Chief among them it would seem was coasting on the Common, and in the epistle we are informed of the existence of two coasts there: "one the big boys' coast and the other the small boys' coast;" "but," the writer adds to fire the ambition of his friend and so induce him to come up for a visit, "the big boys do coast on the small boys' coast and the small boys do coast on the big boys' coast." The rounded accuracy of this statement, devoid of even the least suspicion of the elliptical, testifies conclusively to the writer's time of life.

His father had inherited the family country place in Roxbury, which then was country indeed, innocent of bricks and mortar, of city streets and of course of railroads. Horses and carriages made sole means of outside communication. Partly from necessity, therefore, partly for pleasure, Mr. John Amory Lowell every day drove into town to his business and with him he took his son to attend the Boston Latin School. This school, so named from teaching "small latin and less greek," was then the popular school for boys of the place. To it in consequence went many well-known men, among them his lifelong friends, Mr. George A. Gardner and Mr. Thornton K. Lothrop. The "small latin" was hardly such in quantity, if one may judge by report of the approved Latin grammar of the day. Indeed education would seem to have consisted of the learning by heart — pathetically so called in such connection — of a mass of rules and their elephantine exceptions, sufficient to stagger even a Roman into speaking something else. At all events, of the son's labors at that institution of learning the sole document extant is of the *lucus a non* kind: a petition to his Honor the Mayor and Chairman of the School Committee to allow the boys the first day of May as a holiday in which they might "enjoy the beauties of nature and a recreation and relaxation from school labors." Mr. Lowell appears heading the interesting document, which was couched as convincingly as possible by a classmate.

By nature the place in Roxbury was beautiful, though one would never divine it to-day. Shorn of its fine old trees, even pared of its hills, the land is possessed now by a brewery and tenement houses. But in those days it was otherwise, as fading photographs show, and its garden was both a delight and a name. For Mr. John Amory Lowell had two pastimes, algebra and botany. His spare moments were devoted to one or the other of these pet pursuits. When he was not setting himself problems he was puttering over plants. And he did both to some effect.

His algebraic propensities won him local reputation as a mathematician, and a manuscript volume upon the same, still in the family's possession, is both curious and interesting reading. As a botanist he was known not only at home but abroad, and was on terms of correspondence, not to say criticism, with botanists of his day. His botanical care was not confined to the living; in his studies he collected a fine herbarium which received fully as much of his attention, and attracted attention from others. The son inherited both paternal proclivities, but both rather as deep-seated mental characteristics than as current mental traits. Mathematics he neither cared for, nor was proficient in, but he derived from his father that logical exactness of mind which is their basis. The botany bore greater fruit. His tastes for plants, including both trees and flowers, proved a very deep-seated passion. Doubtless fostered in part by his father's familiarity with shrubs — though as a boy he showed no marked symptoms of botanic zeal — the love of growing things later became his most pronounced avocation.

In 1846 Mr. Lowell entered Harvard College where he spent the four years enjoined for a degree and was duly graduated in 1850. It was not then more than it is now the fashion to study, and he took his parchment void of invidious distinction. Indeed his recollections do not seem to have been specially academic, as one of the most vivid of them had to do with a certain midnight ride for illicit purposes to the Watertown arsenal. His rank in his class, if I am right, was sixteenth, just below what was at the time the $\Phi\beta\kappa$ line. He was not therefore a member of that deservedly distinguished society of learning, but it is significant of his subsequent standing in the community that on the fiftieth anniversary of his graduation he was elected into it as an honorary member, an honor he never lived to receive or even know of, as unknown to the election committee he was on his deathbed at the time.

In college he was neither dissipated nor lazy. His course was much like that of all his fellows, and is distinguished from the commonplace only by a comical dream with which his ancestors saw fit to favor him later on the subject. I say his ancestors advisedly as will shortly appear, and I repeat the dream partly because of its touch of humor, of which he was always fond, and partly because of its psychologic import. The gusto with which he related it at the time proves the censure implied to have been undeserved, but the atavism betrayed by it makes it worth recording.

It was the family tradition that at college its scions should be students, a traditional devoir handed down from father to son, though I am not aware that the fathers always followed it themselves as religiously as

they inculcated it upon the sons. In consequence of his supposed neglect of this precept, it was perhaps not unnatural that his ancestors should disapprove and should show their disapproval. This they did in the only way in their power — by means of a dream. For dreams are really reversions to type and are in consequence very interesting things. When we dream it is the atavic paths of which we are conscious. We think again the thoughts of our progenitors.

The occasion of this visitation was the going up of his second son for the entrance examinations, and the paternal mind was naturally full of the subject. With the unimpeachable authority of dreams he was suddenly made aware one night that he had not done all he might in college. Profoundly stirred by the thought, the singleness of which made it pass for truth, he decided after due and weighty consideration — lasting at least a tenth of a second — to enter the university once more and go over the course again. The fact that he was middle-aged, married, and had a large family only made the resolve seem, after the manner of dreams, the more meritorious. On the strength of his already holding a degree, the college faculty consented to admit him without examination. He was thus enabled triumphantly to get in. His action caused some comment, chiefly commendatory, such as follows an unusually pious deed. He thus became, against his will, something of a cynosure. So the first year glided by till with a speed peculiarly their own the annual examinations were upon him and with them the eyes of the community. Then, and somehow not till then, did he realize, to his consternation, that he had done nothing and was quite unprepared to pass. The situation was beyond words. At this awful moment he woke, — to the pleasing consciousness that his son, not he, would have to pass them on the morrow.

Just before his graduation in 1850 his father, who was not very well, decided to go abroad with his family, including his son Augustus, in the event of needing his help. Mr. Lowell stayed with his father till the spring of 1851. In Paris he was joined by his friend and classmate, Mr. Lincoln Baylies, and there at the same time was John Felton, brother of the then president of the college, with whom the two young men foregathered. John Felton was something of a character and a good deal of a man, with fiery red hair on the outside of his head and much genial wit and wisdom within it. Under his guidance, philosophy, and friendship the two young men passed an interesting and not unprofitable winter, frequenting the theatres to pick up French. Labiche was then in his prime. In the spring the two classmates went off to travel in Germany and Switzerland, and returned by themselves in the autumn to the United States.

On getting home he began his career in State Street, going into the counting-room of Bullard & Lee, East Indian merchants, to learn the business. His quickness of body as well as of mind here procured him a questionable distinction. From his father he had inherited considerable athletic ability, and it was soon discovered in the office that he was fleet of foot. In consequence he was promoted to the post of messenger, with the duty of carrying the foreign business letters to the mail. Now Mr. Lee was addicted to lengthy epistles, to extreme peculiarity in completing them, and to never finishing on time. As the mail was inconsiderate of their importance, he eagerly embraced Lowell's pedestrian possibilities. In consequence it soon became the regular thing for young Lowell to be seen standing, watch in hand, waiting while Mr. Lee completed his last page, folded the foolscap down methodically with his large thumb, and elaborately sealed it. Meanwhile the minutes slipped by with the young man calculating if he still had time to catch the post. It was midsummer and hot. Nevertheless the human Mercury was kept standing within, regardless of how its metallic namesake stood without. Finally when only running at his topmost speed would suffice to get the letter in he would hint that there were but six minutes more before the mail closed. "How many did you make it in last time, Augustus?" Mr. Lee would ask. "Five and three-quarters, sir, but I had to get it in the back way." "I think you can do it this time then." And he did.

This little episode occurred as regularly as mail day. After it had been cheerfully going on for some months, Mr. Bullard, who had been abroad, came home and one afternoon happened in on it. He said nothing at the time; but when Lowell, hot and breathless, had returned once more successful he called him into his private office. "Does what I saw this afternoon occur often, Lowell?" he said to him. "Every mail day, sir," the young man answered. "It shall not occur again," he said. And it never did. With tact equal to his considerateness, Mr. Bullard, on the ground — if I am right — of preferring to do it himself, from that day took the foreign correspondence into his own hands. Perhaps — after Balzac's phrase — this episode may be put between leads and given the air of a thought: the young man who goes quickly will go far.

After two years spent with Bullard & Lee Mr. Lowell's father thought it advisable the young man should learn another line of business, — one in which the family was interested. Francis C. Lowell, the elder, who was the founder of the cotton manufactures of New England and after whom Lowell — their chief seat — was named, was the uncle of Mr.

Lowell's father. In consequence the father had come himself into connection with them, and it seemed well that the son should do likewise. He was therefore sent to Lowell to become practically acquainted with the running of the mills. The house in which he boarded was kept by a woman who was destined through her own exertions to no little notoriety later on. She had a sister who had a beautiful voice. This voice was one of the few alleviations of the place to the boarders, and the same voice, more ably than considerably exploited by the boarding-house keeper, proved the family's making. For the boarding-house keeper was so successful in her management that she soon became the proprietress of the Revere House in Boston, and next emerged by the help of the voice at her entertainments into one of the chief lights of Newport and New York society. Such in a nutshell was the career of Mrs. Paran Stevens.

After passing a year at the mills, Mr. Lowell in 1853 became engaged to and in 1854 married Katharine Bigelow Lawrence, the youngest daughter of the Hon. Abbott Lawrence, then recently returned from his post at the Court of St. James. Mr. Lawrence was as closely identified with the then nascent cotton manufactures of New England as was Mr. John Amory Lowell. Mr. Augustus Lowell thus found himself doubly involved in them, first by birth and then by marriage. For the two centres of the industry were the towns of Lowell and Lawrence, the one named as I have said after his father's uncle, the other after his father-in-law. On his engagement Mr. Lawrence put him in with J. M. Beebe, Morgan & Co. Thus for the years preceding and following his marriage he was busy learning the details of what was to make Massachusetts' mercantile greatness, her manufacturing interests. With one exception, from this period to the end of his life, he was always associated in one way or another with the Lowell and Lawrence mills. He was successively treasurer, that is, the executive head, of more than one of them, and president of many others.

The exception occurred some time after Mr. Lawrence's death, which happened in 1855, when Mr. Lowell entered into business ventures of his own, forming a partnership with Mr. Franklin H. Story for the purpose of engaging in the East Indian trade. For some years this trade was profitable, but the firm was brought to a close by the panic of 1857, for though the firm did not suffer the East Indian trade did. The friendship remained, and among the pleasantest incidents of the writer's boyhood was the acquaintance of this genial gentleman. By a coincidence he died only about a ^{week}~~year~~ before his former partner.

In 1864 the health of his wife necessitated his taking her and his family abroad. They sailed for England in May, and for the next two years and a half lived in Europe; the summers spent in travelling, the winters in Paris. To one so temperamentally prone to a busy life at home, this existence was no sinecure. With a wife at the point of death as it was thought and four young children, Mr. Lowell had his hands full. For a long time Mrs. Lowell did not gain at all. Indeed it was only during the second summer, under the treatment of a country doctor fortuitously encountered in the Austrian Tyrol, that she began to mend. It is instructive, if tardy, to perceive now, in view of the widespread professional ignorance on the subject, that what Mrs. Lowell was suffering from was nervous exhaustion, — a disease, this, which it may be noted incidentally, Faraday, Darwin, Huxley, and Parkman all suffered from without knowing it.

Three little episodes may serve to mark these years of a search after health. The first summer the wanderers happened to be at Bonchurch in the Isle of Wight when the action between the "Kearsarge" and the "Alabama" took place just across the channel off the coast of France. In the second they were among the first to go to that nook in the Austrian Salzkammergut, the village of Ischl, since become well known and popular. In the third and last they were lodged at Schwalbach near Wiesbaden, when that little watering place suddenly became one of the seats of war, and thereupon was occupied alternately by the two opposing forces, the invading Prussians and the native Hessians. Usually evacuation considerably took place before occupation set in; but once by accident the two interfered and a battle occurred between the rear guard of the one army and the advance scouts of the other under the very windows of the hotel. The Hessians, who had been quartered in the town, had heard of the proposed Prussian advance and had at once started to evacuate the place. But they were a little too Teutonically slow. The invaders, although Prussians and *landwehr* at that, were, quite to their own surprise, too quick for them; a belated squad of Hessians had got only halfway up the hill on its way out when the Prussian cavalry was heard cantering into the town. There was no time to go on unseen when fortunately a friendly wood pile by the side of the road offered its shelter. Instantly the squad deployed behind it and waited. Five minutes later three cavalymen cantered past the hotel, their pistols pointed at the windows as they went by, and started unsuspectingly up the hill. The spectators in the secret stood waiting the surprise. Just as the dragoons got abreast of the wood pile the squad deployed out and fired.

One dragoon fell on the spot, a second turned like a flash and leaped his horse over an embankment twenty feet to a road below, while the third wheeled in his tracks and came galloping wildly down the street again. All which served to relieve the watering place dulness.

By the autumn of 1866 Mrs. Lowell was so far recovered that Mr. Lowell was able to return with her to the United States. It was many years before he left it again.

He now took an office next his father's, and became gradually connected, on the one hand, with the manufacturing interests which his father controlled, and on the other with the many trusts his father managed. During Mr. John Amory Lowell's subsequent absences in Europe the care of these things devolved upon his son, and with the former's increasing years the care became more and more permanent. In 1875 he was chosen treasurer of the Boott Cotton Mills. This office he held for eleven years. About the same time he was elected to succeed his father on the board of the Massachusetts Hospital Life Insurance Company, — familiarly known as the Life Office, State Street's oldest, staidest, and most famous institution, whose real business has but a bowing acquaintance with its name, — and later was put upon its executive committee. Of the corporation of the Provident Institution for Savings, — another financial landmark, not so deceptively named to the uninitiated, — he was likewise made a member, and eventually became its president, succeeding the Mr. Lee of epistolary fame. At this date too he began his long career upon the board of the Boston Gas Light Company, then so ably managed by Mr. Greenough, a career which ended more than twenty years later in the negotiations he conducted as its president when it became necessary to sell the property, which he did for two and a quarter times all it had ever cost. In addition to holding the offices above mentioned he was treasurer of the Merrimack Manufacturing Company, June 20–October 29, 1877; president of the Massachusetts Cotton Mills; of the Massachusetts Mills in Georgia; of the Pacific Mills; of the Merrimack Manufacturing Company, 1887–8, 1892 to death; of the Boott Cotton Mills; of the Lowell Bleachery; of the Lowell Machine Shop; of the Glendon Iron Company; and a director of the Everett Mills; of the Middlesex Company; of the Lawrence Mills; of the Lowell Manufacturing Company; of the Suffolk National Bank; of the Cranberry Iron Company; of the Plymouth Cordage Company; besides being a trustee of the Union Trust Company of New York. This long list means even more than it usually would; for Mr. Lowell was a director who did direct. In every concern into which he entered he very soon took

a leading part. Never seeking a place, his ability was such that he found himself forced into position after position of responsibility. Indomitable, he was always selected to do what others agreed ought to be done but were averse to doing. For Mr. Lowell knew no such thing as shirking in the discharge of duty. He disliked the disagreeable as much as any one, but he was not weak. Of the financial position he held in the down-town community it is enough commentary that seven bonds of treasurers of great corporations were found in his tins at his death, deposited with him as president.

Such were the business concerns with which he was connected. But side by side with them he gave much time and thought to matters of more public interest. For many years he was a trustee of the Boston Eye and Ear Infirmary. Not simply one in name, for to him and to Mr. Brown its management was for a long time chiefly due.

Ex-officio he was a trustee of the Boston Art Museum for twenty years, and a trustee of the Lowell Textile School for the four years preceding his death. Of purely public functions he once performed one, that of member of the Boston School Committee in 1857-58, and from the echoes of this which have reached the writer it would seem that politics played as objectionable a part in what should have been above them then as now.

Before going abroad he had had a summer place at Beverly, but attributing the loss of a child there to unhealthiness of the shore he sold it. On coming home he cast about for a country-place where he could live the year round, as being alike beneficial for his wife and his children. He found it in Brookline. His children were still young, and he took to repeating the experience of his own boyhood, driving them and himself into town every day to school and to business respectively. Out of it, beyond business hours, his life was not quite bucolic. The place he had bought possessed already a fine garden and two greenhouses. In them he centred his affections, greenhouse and garden dividing the year between them. Two hot-houses of grapes helped to shield the latter, which lay in a hollow open to the south. Natural embankments enclosed it on the east and west, and a raised roadway, shut off from view, made artificial protection on the north. Clipped evergreens stood for sentinels along a terraced path, ending in an arbor which fringed one side of it, and a corresponding row faced them upon the slope opposite. In this sheltered spot he spent much of his time. Pruning his shrubs, tying up his plants, and attending generally to the welfare of his flowers, he was almost as much of an inhabitant of the place as they. It was a world in

which he found infinite satisfaction. His roses were his chief delight. And fine they were — no finer than the feeling with which he showed them off. But nothing vegetal was alien to him. He would point out with almost as much zest, punctuated by a wink, a foreign thorn-tree, which flanked the avenue, a platted mass of thorns a foot long, the despair of squirrels and cats.

His botany was of the old-fashioned kind. He did not pursue it as a science, but cultivated it as an art. His plants were rather pets than subjects for vivisection. Philosophically he was not concerned with their genealogy or relationship and disbelieved Darwinism to the day of his death. But in his intercourse with them he knew the life and the merits or demerits of each, and took pleasure in their thriving with something like affectionate interest. He behaved like a distant relative, the while stoutly denying that he was one. Indeed the relation did not seem so very distant, for he was never tired of attending to them, and took a paternal pride in their introduction to others. He would conduct you to view some bush at the moment in flower, and point out in what lay its peculiar praiseworthiness with the care of long acquaintance. Pretty much every tree upon his place — and it included some rare ones — was personally known to him. And if you strolled round with him he would talk fine print about each with you. He was constantly importing new plants and then watching them succeed. Though he made no parade of knowledge or of success, he not infrequently had plants which knew no rival in the neighborhood. A contrast this side of his life made with that of his morning down-town, where he played so prominent a part in the active affairs of men.

The long list of business offices held by him might lead one to infer that his time in the city must have been fully occupied by them alone. But he was much too busy a man for such to be the case. With all his industrial and financial concerns he found time for an equal employment in educational affairs. His ability was of the executive kind, which was as vital to the one as to the other. It thus came about that side by side with his business, and almost hand in hand with it, so practical was he in his workings, went another employment — usually only on speaking terms with the first, and then those of a beggar — the conduct of educational concerns. Busy as Mr. Lowell was with purely business affairs, he was equally engaged in matters of mind. Partly the accident of birth, partly the possession of ability, placed him in positions of authority in two important educational institutions: the Lowell Institute in the first place, and the Massachusetts Institute of Technology in the second.

Of the first of these he became the trustee in 1881, on the death of his father. Even before this, however, much of the work had fallen to him. The Lowell Institute is too well known to need description, but one phase of it will bear mention in connection with the man who for so long was its trustee. Most institutions of learning live by begging. If they happen to be possessed of presidents who are past masters in the art, they thrive; if not so blessed, they languish. That a president should be an able intellectual director is unfortunately not so pressing a demand as that he should be a persistent, importunate, and successful beggar. In view of this fact deficits in college finances have lost their terror and surpluses are unknown, a sympathetic public being with confidence relied on to stand in the gap. Now the peculiarity of the Lowell Institute has been not only that it is not dependent upon alms-giving but that it has thriven and grown without it. Although on the one hand it has paid larger salaries than any college or kindred institution to the teacher, it has asked no fee whatever of the taught. Yet despite this liberality on both sides, its funds have more than quadrupled in amount. Part of this increase has been due to the wise terms of the endowment, part to the like wisdom of the two successive trustees. Kindred wisdom it has been in both senses, for by a provision of the testator the trustee must be of the testator's family if a fit person exist of the name. How fit Mr. Lowell was for the post this able result of his administration of the finances attests.

But besides being its financial head, Mr. Lowell was its intellectual body and its executive arm as well. For the Institute is a one man power, an absolute dictatorship. Mr. Lowell was president, corporation, and treasurer all together. And the success he made of it shows again the wisdom of such a rule, provided only the ruler be fit. Of his capacity as financier the property speaks; of his ability in general administration the list of lecturers before the institution sufficiently betokens. At the time the Institute was founded lectures were a popular form of instruction, and the object of the testator was to secure for the people of Boston lectures by the most eminent men at home and abroad, and to give these to the public free of charge. His wish has been well carried out. On the roster of the books are to be found a majority of the names which are known the world over, and almost every one of those to whose possessors distance or age or language did not prove an impassable bar. America, Europe, even Asia have contributed to the list. Some of these men came more than once; and many of them became well known personally to Americans. But the fact connected with them which speaks

most for the institution and its trustee is that well-nigh without exception each came originally at his instigation. Almost all the famous foreigners in science, literature, or art who have been in this country have owed their personal introduction to it to the trustee of the Lowell Institute. Since from over seas these lecturers came, simply as a bond between countries the Institute has played no unimportant part.

Mr. Lowell's tie to science was thus rather indirect than direct, but it was none the less intimate if in a different way. By virtue of his office he was brought personally in contact with the scientists of his day, and in a most pleasant and withal domestic manner. For besides meeting them at the lectures, of which he always attended the opening one and oftener than not the whole course, he was in the habit of entertaining the lecturers during their stay in Boston at his house at dinner, sometimes more than once. Many is the memorable evening he passed in consequence with men who have made the world what it is. Such personal knowledge of a man is as invaluable as it is invigorating. Even in an estimate of the mind a side light of no mean value is shed on it by intercourse with the personality. The man proves a footnote to his own writings. This advantage of glosses on the text Mr. Lowell possessed; and in various aspects in as much as he was thrown with these men in diverse relations. Intercourse of the sort he enjoyed more or less for nearly half a century. For, as I have said, before he became trustee he had been acting for his father, and even before that had met the lecturers at his father's house. During the second half of the nineteenth century he had thus been familiar, not only with the century's best thought, but with most of its best thinkers. And he passed away just as the century itself was drawing to a close.

Coincident with holding this responsible post in educational matters of a general character Mr. Lowell filled a second position of a more direct kind and not less important. For quite as long a term as he managed the Lowell Institute was he associated with the government of the Massachusetts Institute of Technology. Entering the corporation of that institution in the early seventies, he very soon took a leading part in its policy. From that time the conduct of its affairs had been intimately connected with him, much more so than the public is cognizant of. For Mr. Lowell never put himself forward, having an innate aversion to unnecessary publicity. Even on the few occasions when it was indispensable for him to appear, he only did so, as those in his confidence are aware, after great reluctance.

Mr. Lowell was identified with this phenomenally successful institution

almost from its start. The Massachusetts Institute of Technology was founded in 1861, chiefly through the instrumentality of Prof. William B. Rogers. To the same eminent mind it owed its early success. Measure of the man's executive ability in the first place, its success was in the long run the sign of his forethought in founding it. A school of technology was exactly what the American genius had demanded for many years in vain. It seems strange that no one should have heeded this unmistakable cry of nature before; but men are prone to being thus strangely deaf, till an interpreter arises. For a century the American has been noted for his innate inventiveness and general ingenuity, and has been equally noted for the untrained character of his craft. In some things this did well enough, but in the higher branches it left a good deal to be desired. To supplement natural aptitude with proper training was thus the one thing needful. To think of it was so simple a matter as to require a master mind for the thought. It was a piece of educational acumen of the highest order. And it has borne its inevitable result. But though it was destined to great and permanent success it would be contrary to common sense to suppose that the move was fully appreciated, from the very start. On the contrary, had it not been for its founder the institution would probably have gone under.

After Mr. Roger's death much came to devolve upon Mr. Lowell; and since then, that is for the last quarter of a century, the policy of the Institute has been intimately associated with him. Elected a member of the corporation in 1873, he was chosen a member of the executive committee in 1883, and was kept upon it to the day of his death. During his term of service were chosen four presidents, and I need only mention the name of General F. A. Walker, who was the longest incumbent, to suggest how wisely made these choices were. But the work of the committee did not end with the selection of the executive; as its name implies, it was itself a part of that executive and its function was continual. As the senior member of the committee Mr. Lowell's force was felt in every portion of the policy pursued. Not a measure was passed which had not been influenced by his opinion. His judicious advice was fully appreciated by General Walker. Indeed the two men were natural complements to each other, General Walker with his brilliant, engaging personality, and Mr. Lowell with his uncommon judgment and invincible determination.

The position taken by the Institute under this leadership is well known. The institution has quadrupled in size, and what is far more important, has more than quadrupled in prestige. It is recognized to-day not only

as the first, but as easily the first, school of technical arts in this country. To it now flock students from the farthest portions of these United States: from Oregon and Texas, from Illinois and Ohio, as well as from New York and Massachusetts. And as graduates they go back again to help develop the country. If any such institution may fairly be called national the Massachusetts Institute of Technology is the one.

Nor is this all. Not confined to the limits of this continent, its fame has successfully invaded lands across the sea. It is not long since Sir Robert Ball informed the writer that it was in advance of anything of the kind in Great Britain; a belief which he had years before acted on by sending his son to it, who is now practising in England. The belief would seem to be spreading; for in June, 1901, examinations for admission to it were held in London. Its rank would seem even to be recognized at home, which means that it probably is of some importance, as the American believes firmly in the *ignota pro magnifico*. The post-graduate course, pursued by the ranking men of the U. S. Naval Academy at foreign institutes heretofore, is in future to be taken at the Institute. It has been the custom of the Academy since 1883 to send the first few scholars of the highest grade, the construction department, abroad to finish their education. At first it was Greenwich they went to, till the British Government ludicrously enough became sensitive to the cadets outstripping their own students and forbade them. Then the Navy sent men to the University of Glasgow, and lastly to the École Polytechnique in Paris, where the recent ones have all graduated. In future it will be in Boston. Evidently the United States Government is convinced of the primacy of the Institute.

What Mr. Lowell's share in this success was may best be gathered from an episode which occurred about a twelvemonth before his death. Feeling himself worn by a painful trouble which he had had for years, he was minded in a moment of acute access of it to give up active work. Accordingly he sent in his resignation to his colleagues of the corporation. They refused to accept it, and the committee did their best to persuade him to reconsider his determination; but in vain. Whereupon a memorial was drawn up, signed by every member of the corporation accessible at the time, protesting against his resignation, and begging him not to withdraw his services from the institution. Such unanimous spontaneity of appreciation in a body of forty odd members is not common. That he was profoundly touched by this mark of confidence and esteem needs no saying.

Of the American Academy of Arts and Sciences he was made a member in 1886. He was first the treasurer and then the vice-president. On the death of Professor Cooke, deeming it fitting that the post of president should be filled by a man of science, he secured the election of Agassiz. When the change into sections was made he became the vice-president of his section, — jurisprudence and literature. He was also a member of the American Association for the Advancement of Science from 1898; of the Massachusetts Historical Society in 1900; of the Colonial Society of Massachusetts from 1898. He died on June 22, 1901.

Such, in brief, was what Mr. Lowell did. Quite as important is what he was. For the man was always behind his measures, as the whole includes the part. His actions were but parcel of himself. Not always is this the case. Some men become noteworthy for what they do, while being notorious for what they are. But with him the act was outcome of the man. He said what he meant and meant what he said. In this unity lay one element of his force. To those with whom he came in contact this oneness with one's self made itself felt. To the world at large, which sees the works but not the workings, his hand in matters which he had brought about often escaped notice. For a certain ingrained aversion to publicity prevented him from putting himself forward. Nothing, however, restrained him from pushing his measures. In consequence, many as were the acts one can point to in his unusually active life, those which actuated others without appearing themselves were more; in consequence also, the world remained in ignorance of the motive cause. For he acted for results; and what is to take effect does not need to make it.

Effect indeed was the very opposite of what Mr. Lowell was in thought or word or deed; and very refreshing it is, like a cool breath of pure air in the artificial heat and closeness of a crowded room, to consider such a character in these days of blatant, forth-putting mediocrity. When to seem is at a premium, and to be at a discount, it is invigorating to turn to a life which owed nothing to adventitious or meretricious aid; a life which not only was fine, but escaped the soiling consequent upon too much mental fingering by the world at large. To be generally in evidence means a loss of that delicacy of distinction, if it means nothing more, which is for so much in beauty of character. But it means usually very much more; it leads inevitably to a substitution of superficiality for solidity, of appearance for reality, of a sinking to a level of one's audience instead of a rising superior to applause. To say that a man owed nothing to effect is to say of him the best that can possibly be said. The natural forces with which we daily come in contact owe nothing to such cause;

on the contrary they stir us all the deeper, if we stop to think, for the very fact that they do not stir us without such thought. We are impressed the more by what seems superior to the impression it makes.

There is, too, another merit in the absence of effect — a gain in effectiveness. It is the greatest compliment to a man's ability that he should succeed without seeming to do so, because it shows that all his force has been massed upon the one strategic point. We are all familiar with this when it is done of intent aforethought.

As potent is the principle when the self-effacement is unconscious. The one obliteration differs from the other only in being instinctive instead of being thought out; and the one is as telling as the other. However it be brought about, the fact that the self is effaced is proof that the work has been done well. For it shows that the result has been brought to pass with the least expenditure of force. Personality causes friction, and evidence of self is therefore proof that force has been uselessly employed. The fact that a man has succeeded in having his idea prevail without forcing himself along with it is sign of the best kind of work.

Now this was the case with Mr. Lowell. It was so because of an unusual combination of characteristics, a singular wedding of energy in deed with dislike of its external trappings.

To an exceptional extent, therefore, Mr. Lowell's distinction lay in character. Three qualities he possessed to an unusual degree, qualities each rare enough as it is: will, ability, and integrity. He was, in the first place, a combination of force and ability as simple and as uncommon as success, which is its immediate consequence. The one is but the necessary premiss to the other's conclusion. If a man be originally possessed of the first he is sure eventually to possess the second. Schopenhauer's definition of the world as all will and representation certainly holds of one part of it, — the affairs of men. If the affairs consist rather in the dealing with men than nature the representation takes the form of words, and may be paraphrased as first the skill to put a thing convincingly and then the will to put it through. Mr. Lowell combined the two qualities.

Will he possessed to the full. He was noted for his determination. To his lot, in consequence, fell many necessary and thankless tasks. He likewise escaped many empty honors. For where he went he worked. No one ever thought of preferring him to a post merely *honoris causa*. For people knew that in getting him they got not a figure-head, but a man who was certain to make himself felt; not because he tried to do so, but because it was in him to do it. He entered concerns not by the postern

gate of popularity, but by the portal of inevitableness. He was chosen because he was necessary. And he stayed for the same reason.

Now will is pure force, uncomplexioned, the mere dynamic outcome of the idea. Its effectiveness to any particular end depends, therefore, upon the character of the idea whose explosive force it is. With Mr. Lowell the idea owed its carrying power to two characteristics: judiciousness in itself and judiciousness in its presentation. In the first place he was apt to be right, that is, to be wise. His judgment of things within his own field was excellent. It was essentially sound. His was that uncommon sense-possession, the possession of common sense. Instinctively his mind worked correctly. It was the exact opposite of the mind of the crank, which may often hit off a brilliant conception, but which is too unsafe to be trusted. With him no one idea ever usurped the right of way to the exclusion of others. Each had its due effect; which fundamental balance makes the only safe foundation for superstructure.

In the next place he was as shrewd as he was sound. He had a keenness for the essential point which almost assured success in advance. Insisting upon what was vital, he waved less important issues to the other side. In this consists the consummation of the art of commerce with one's kind. An instance of the combined breadth and shrewdness of his business insight occurs to my mind. "When I lease a building," he once said to me, "I ask a good price of the tenant and then do all the little repairs he wants. The price makes its impression but once; the perquisites repeatedly, and the latter impressions stand nearer to the falling due of the lease."

Backing up his judgment was his excellence of exposition. His ideas were the more telling for being well told. His words were few and to the point. In a twinkling he would dissect a situation, and with equal terseness suggest its remedy. With ability for audience this had immediate effect; with mediocrity it was rather his tact that told. His logic was too accurate for popular approval, which prefers the coloring of emotion to the lines of thought. For very few men care for truth as they care for their feelings. And Mr. Lowell's forte was not the silver tongue of eloquence, but the more golden gift of statement. He could put a point so that it pierced perception instantly.

Lastly, there was about his advocacy of his measures an impersonality as potently as it was subtly persuasive. It was not that the ideas themselves were what one would call impersonal, but that the idea appeared by itself with so little of that aura of the personal, which in human affairs the man unconsciously throws around it, as to appear to stand alone. For

in Mr. Lowell's case it was as if he were but the mouthpiece of the idea, so heartily did he identify himself with it, and yet so single was his intent. It was the idea he thought of, not of himself. Such a condition tends in a twofold way to conviction; first, by the sincerity of the pleading, and secondly, by the absence so far as is humanly possible, of the antagonism roused by personality.

Recognition of his ability followed any knowledge of him; it did not, as with some men, precede it. Those qualities compounded of sociability and forth-puttingness, however unintentional, which make for instant distinction among one's fellows, were not his by nature. His abilities were solid, not showy. Nor was it his bent to go out of his way in the road we all travel to make a new path. He neither courted position nor shirked it. When it once fell to him he became as it were the office. Nothing was ever done by him for his own sake, however incidentally. He seemed simply to embody his trust. In intent he was singularly single. Indeed, in describing his action I find it difficult to convey the combination of self-obliteration and of self-sufficiency in its best sense, which he was. For the character is uncommon. One often witnesses self-abnegation. But it is usually wedded to weakness. Or, on the other hand, one sees strength associated with self-seeking. Few men are essentially impersonal enough to strive strenuously for the thing in itself, as if it were a person. He did.

This was perhaps the stranger that his mental makeup was not of the abstract but of the distinctly concrete kind. In practical, not in theoretical matters, he was great. Widely read as he was he never seemed to care to theorize. He enjoyed highly the theories of others, when they did not collide with the puritanism which, as I have said, he inherited doubly distilled. Even this was perhaps as much due to the society in which he had been brought up. He was educated before the modern movement in thought took place, and Boston of sixty years ago was even behind the rest of the world in this stirring of the waters of stagnation. Not in knowledge nor in intellect; it was in cast of mind he differed. His preference was for action. Of this he never tired. To recreation he was less given. Such as he took was of a serious kind. He was a member of the Wednesday Evening Club, of the Thursday Evening Club, and of a class dinner club; but clubs which consist but of a local habitation and a name he never cared to join. Loafing and he were strangers.

Will and the power of representation were, as I have said, two of his attributes. But the second of these should, though it often does not, include a quality which is itself fundamental to all character, and which

Mr. Lowell possessed to the utmost — the quality of honesty. In these days, when successful financial operations so often depend upon will and *misrepresentation*, it is no small thing to say of a successful man of affairs that he was conspicuously honest. When to steal enough is to steal with credit, it is cheering to see business triumph attendant on unimpeachable integrity. And this was typically true of him. Honest he was by essence. Verity was of the very fibre of his being.

Nor is it only of the grosser form of that attribute which has usurped the generic name of honesty of which I would speak, but of that finer sense of fair dealing which we include under the appellation of a just man. His uprightness was perfectly well known. No adversary ever questioned that. A tribute to the fact once came in an amusing manner to Mr. Lowell's ears in one of the latter years of his life. He was passing through a railway station in Boston one afternoon when he chanced to overhear two men unknown to him discussing his character. It was his own name that caught his attention. "Augustus Lowell," said one, "is a hard man, but he is absolutely honest." "Yes," said the other, "he is emphatically that." It is not often that one overhears a bit of one's own obituary during one's life, nor is made privy to concurrent testimony on the subject from both sides of a discussion. As to the hardness imputed to him, it had no foundation in fact, though it was often attributed to him by people who knew him only from the outside. A cast of countenance which looked stern when in repose, and which was purely a matter of feature, was chiefly responsible for the reputation. He was quite aware of the look himself, as well as of that to which it was due. As a matter of fact he was very tender-hearted, singularly so for a man of his determination. Few suspected him of the kindnesses he was constantly doing, so unostentatiously were they performed, and almost no one credited him with the affection he felt.

The complexion of his character—for will is an uncomplexioned force—may be described in one word: exactness. Accuracy of statement and honesty of purpose are both but facets of a crystallization of thought. A man who sees clearly must be honest by instinct if he be not dishonest by intent. There is with him no limbo of self-deception. Much of the untruth current in the world is due to an initial haziness of conception subsequently seized upon and distorted to its own ends by passion, without disquiet to the perpetrator, because unrecognized as distortion by him. Mr. Lowell was essentially exact. His nature therefore imposed honesty. He saw much too correctly either to jumble or to juggle with his thoughts.

Important as the qualities he possessed are to the making of a man, they are no less so to the making of a community. And in any constitutional country no small part of the value of a man lies in his value as a citizen. Indirect as well as direct his influence may be, and with universal suffrage the former is apt to be the case with the best men. To be determined, discerning, and honest does not, unfortunately, in our system of supposed political equality, lead to purely civic distinction. For the choice of a popular suffrage cannot rise above its source. But if the qualities do not lead to civic distinction for their possessor they do something as enduring, — they tend to raise to his level the community of which he forms a part. For without the first attribute, nothing is possible; without the second, foolishness; without the third, knavery. The apathy of most of us, the crankiness of a few, and the financial trickery of others, are the several results of the absence of these qualities.

Too strong a personality to be generally popular, recognition of such a character is slow. For we are all prone to praise what we like. Only when distance does away with personal perspective do men, like hills, reveal their height.

Posterity gives the final judgment. For posterity judges of a man's worth unhaloed by the engaging lack of it, and sets the seal of its appreciation upon those who have contributed to the world's advance and incidentally to posterity's own existence. To make for this advance is the best any man can do, and to this end to be determined, discerning, and honest is one of the surest means. If a man possess these attributes he will not have lived in vain.

PERCIVAL LOWELL.



DOES NOT CIRCULATE